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Canadian Rights and Canadian Independence.

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Original.

HISTORY OF LOWER CANADA.

(CONTINUED.)

The political relations between Great Britain and the United States had not been improved since the fatal encounter between the *Leopard* and the *Chesapeake*. The national horizon was evidently darkening and it was reasonable to expect that a storm would soon take place. The affairs between these two nations had been rendered more exasperated and on a less amicable footing by the new and unfortunate catastrophe which took place in the month of May 1811, between the American ship of war called the *President* carrying 44 guns, and the English ship named *Little Belt* carrying but fourteen guns.

The administration of Sir James Henry Craig had been weighed in its proper scales in England, and the ministers who are always ready to oppress and to ill-treat the people when they needed not their services, were about to change forthwith their policy and by a cessation of their oppression & by an introduction of cajolery and flattery to regain the confidence of that same people, whom, through their Governor, they were branding as being seditious and traitorous. It was evident to all prudent and reflecting men that in case of a war between brother Jonathan and John Bull, Sir James Craig had rendered himself too unpopular by his high-handed and tyrannical conduct to do any good in the Province of Lower Canada. Consequently his recall was determined upon; but all the appearances of a voluntary dismissal were preserved so as not to censure one who had so faithfully executed the mandates of his Royal Masters. To the utter astonishment and the great joy of the Canadian people a Proclamation was issued on the 11th of June by His Excellency Sir James Henry Craig, announcing that on account of his ill-health he was forced to abandon the administration of the Province and that the Government of the Colony would fall on the oldest protestant Executive Councillor, the Honorable Thomas Dunn—the same individual who had already filled that station previous to Sir James Henry Craig's arrival. After the issue of this Proclamation, Sir James Henry Craig took passage for England on board of the Frigate *Amelia*.

Thus was Canada delivered of one of the boldest and one of the fiercest and most arbitrary invaders of popular rights, that ever came to govern that ill-starred Colony. Before dismissing his administration, we wish to recall to the memory of our readers the shameful and vile transaction in which no less a personage than Sir James Henry Craig, a British Governor, took a very active part. We allude to the secret mission of the notorious John Henry, who in January 1809, was sent by the special order of Sir James Henry Craig to the Eastern States of the American Union, with the injunction of informing his employer, how far, in the event of a collision between England and the United States, the Eastern States would look to England for assistance, or be disposed to enter into a connection with Canada. All our American readers are well informed of the different transactions and the numerous letters which passed between the Governor of Lower Canada and John Henry, and they also know that this same individual after having done all the dirty work required by Sir James Henry Craig, applied for his promised

reward which he could not obtain; and then turning his back upon his former employers, he sold his great secret to the American government, and thus exposed to the whole world the greatest iniquity and depravity of which mankind can be susceptible. We lay before our readers a copy of the instructions given by Sir James Henry Craig to Henry, and also a copy of a credential from the same to the ignominious spy he was sending to the States, to foment and excite armed outrage upon a peaceable and unsuspecting people, with whom England was then at profound peace.

We refer our readers to the Appendix on the last page—A and B.

Americans who read these documents, you can thereby judge how sincerely the English nation respect your national independence, when SPIES are in the constant employment of British ministers and Governors, with the view of fomenting discord among yourselves and bringing you back to your former allegiance to a Crown which has imbued her hands in the best blood of your countrymen. Were it allowed to an historian to anticipate on events, how many of THOSE PAID SPIES could we point out to you both from the adjoining British Provinces and (what we are reluctantly forced to confess) some, nay many from AMERICA'S citizens, who, in the last Canadian troubles for the sake of British gold and silver, rendered themselves blasphemous perjurers to their country's constitution, and by their infamous information carried to a blood-thirsty Governor, have sent many a noble victim to an untimely grave, and that too, by an unnatural and violent death on the scaffold. But let us cease these soul-harrowing reflections and thank Divine Providence that the infernal schemes of Sir James Henry Craig through his paid spy against the Republican liberties of the New England States, had entirely failed, and that they proved in time more injurious to those for whose benefit they were concocted, than to those against whom they were intended. Let us hope that such will yet be the case with the cowardly and treasonable conduct of many of those pretended republicans who so powerfully aided Great Britain in crushing the spirit of republican liberty in the Canadas during the troubles of 1837 and '38.

But to our subject. The day after the departure of Sir James Henry Craig, the new President issued a Proclamation by which he announced to the Lower Canadians that he had assumed the administration of the Government and that he continued all the officers of the government in the discharge of their respective duties.

The encounter between the ships *President* and *Little Belt*, again aroused the fears of the President of Lower Canada, and on the 12th of August, he issued a Proclamation by which he prohibited all exportation from the Province of Lower Canada, of saltpetre, gun-powder, ammunitions, arms and warlike stores of any denomination or description, and this embargo was to remain in force till the first of January following.

The administration of this old, superannuated man was of short duration. On the 19th of September, the artillery of Cape Diamond announced to the citizens of Quebec that a new Governor had arrived, in the person of Sir George Prevost, who was a passenger in the *Melampus*. It will be unnecessary for us to make an eulogium of this Governor. He doubtless had his faults, and committed many errors as we shall have occasion to show, yet of all the British Governors sent to that Colony, he was without exception the best, and the most disposed to treat the Colonists with mildness and lenity, so far as his instructions from his Royal masters in Downing-street would allow him. He found the province, the administration of which he was coming to assume, a prey to intestine dissensions caused by the rash and inconsiderate conduct of Sir James Henry Craig, and externally menaced by foreign invasion from its American neighbor-

hours. Sir George Prevost was a man of too much cunning and judgment not to adopt a different course from that followed by his predecessors. He had studied the foibles of human nature, and knew well that nothing can better subdue opposition in men than flattery and the apparent show of entire confidence in them. Such was the course he adopted, and so far did he succeed, that very soon nearly all kinds of opposition to the local administration disappeared. There was but one voice from one end of the Province to the other, and that was one continual burst of praise for the new Governor who had proved himself an angel of peace after the reign of terror under Sir James Henry Craig.

The Legislature was called together on the 21st of Feb. 1812. The new Governor made a speech highly complimentary to the members, and asked for the renewal of the "Alien Bill," and that for the better preservation of His Majesty's government in the Province. Although these two acts and more particularly the last one had been the means in the hands of the tyrant Craig to commit the most unjustifiable attacks upon the liberty of the press and upon the personal freedom of the Canadians, yet the House had been so much entrapped by the flattery bestowed upon them, that in their answer to the Governor's speech they promised to pass these acts.

The Legislative Council again took the lead and passed the "Alien Bill" in all its hideous form but it is with pleasure that we have to record that the House very judiciously introduced such amendments to the bill as to impose upon the Governor of the Province, who would dare to make any abuse of the powers conferred on him by this act, a heavy responsibility which was not previously the case. The favorite bill of the Colonial government, viz: that, for the better preservation of His Majesty's government in the Province found its deserved death in this session, the Legislative Council having refused to assent to those amendments which the House of Assembly thought proper to make to the bill. Thus one monstrous act, which was an evident encroachment upon the life, liberty and honor of the Canadian people disappeared this year from the Statute book of Lower Canada, to which it never was ought but a deep and damning stain. During this session, a bill to regulate the contested elections, as also a bill to regulate the Provincial Militia placing all the male population over 16 years of age at the disposal of the Executive government, were both passed and received the Royal sanction. The propriety of indemnifying the members of the House of Assembly was again broached in this session, but no decision was taken upon this subject.

After a session of much arduous labor the Legislature was prorogued on the 19th of May. Twenty-two bills became law, and the Governor made a closing speech in which he lavished the highest encomiums on the loyalty and fidelity of the members of the House of Assembly, who had so liberally provided the means for supporting His Majesty's government in case of a war with the United States.

The storm between Great Britain and the United States which had been gathering for a long while past, broke out at last on the 18th of June 1812, when the American Congress passed a Bill declaring war against England for her unjustifiable pretensions and her inhuman attacks upon the life and liberty of American citizens. On the next day Mr. Madison the President of the American Union issued his proclamation making it known to all the world that Great Britain and the United States were no longer on an amicable footing, but were on the contrary in open hostilities.

The Governor of Lower Canada had already prepared himself for such a calamitous event. On the 12th of April he had ordered the raising of a body of Canadians to be named "Corps des Voltigeurs" and Major De Salaberry had been appointed

the commander of it. On the 28th of May four battalions of incorporated militia were called into active service under the command of four Lieutenant Colonels of Canadian extraction.

The news of the declaration of war was known at Quebec on the 29th of June. The Governor left forthwith for Montreal and was soon followed by a battalion of the incorporated Canadian Militia. Sir George Prevost in the perilous situation in which the Province was found to be, thought it his duty to throw himself upon the liberality and good feelings of the Legislature. The Canadians who had been pointed out as notorious rebels by the predecessor of Sir George Prevost, were in the opening speech of His Excellency, addressed in the following complimentary manner.

"To meet this unexpected event, I rely, with the fullest confidence, upon the spirit of his majesty's subjects in this province, upon their attachment to, and zeal for the religion of their forefathers, their loyalty to the true interests of their country; and as I feel satisfied that they are neither to be intimidated by the threats nor deluded by the insidious offers of the enemy, I shall depend implicitly, under Divine Providence, upon their best exertions, aided by the courage and loyalty of the militia and by the valor, skill and discipline of his majesty's regular forces, for repelling every hostile attempt that may be made upon this colony."

The House immediately passed a bill to authorize the Governor to issue army Bills which were to be met by *specie* from the English treasury, and the interest thereon is yet due to the Province.

On the 1st of August this short session of the Provincial Parliament was brought to a close after having passed the bill of which we have spoken above.

Meanwhile the American government whose ostensible object in this war, was to possess themselves of the Canadas, and thereby get rid of an enemy who could at any time annoy them so powerfully with the aid of the hordes of Indians who were in the rear and flank of the American Union, made extensive preparations to invade Upper Canada in the vicinity of Detroit, in the territory of Michigan. Brigadier-General Hull, an old officer of the Revolutionary war, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of that portion of the American army which was deputed to make this invasion. A braver set of men he could never have been appointed to command, but whilst it was his lot to be proud of the army over which he was placed, it was reserved to this same army to weep very soon over their dishonour and disgrace, in having the misfortune of being under the command of so knavish and cowardly a chief.

On the 12th July the march of this army had been so rapid through the wilderness of the *far West*, that General Hull had crossed the Detroit River and had taken possession of Sandwich a small village situated in the Province of Upper Canada nearly opposite Detroit, where he issued the following proclamation which the reader will find in the Appendix on the last page marked C.

But alas the prosperous and victorious course of the American General was to be of no long duration. A panic seized upon the old chief, he re-crossed the Detroit River abandoning thus in the most cowardly manner those friendly Canadians who had received him so kindly and so generously. Some of these men finding their fortune so much blended with the fate of the American army which they had openly joined, followed General Hull to the American territory, but others were so situated that they could not very properly risk the abandonment of their homes; and these were the objects of the inveterate wrath of the British, who exercised over them the most unmerciful vengeance, as we shall have occasion to show by and bye.

On the 18th of Aug. Major Gen. Brock of the British army took possession of Sandwich and fortified himself. On the 15th he sent a flag of truce to the American

General, with an invitation to surrender forthwith; and on the refusal to acquiesce to his peremptory demand he began firing shells and cannon balls from the British side on the fort of Detroit. On the next morning he crossed the river about three miles below Detroit, and very soon after General Hull unexpectedly gave orders to his men who were about 1100 strong, to retreat towards the small fort of Detroit which could have been manned with 300 men. The British continued advancing towards the American fort when to the great astonishment and indignation of the American soldiers, a white handkerchief was hung by the General's orders on the walls of the fort; so unexpected was this cowardly movement on the part of the American General, that the British were themselves petrified with astonishment; they despatched one of their officers & learned that General Hull was prepared to surrender without having even fired a single gun. The capitulation was soon agreed upon and signed by both parties. Twenty five iron and eight brass pieces of ordnance fell by this shameful surrender into the hands of the British, and the flower of the American army was delivered over to the English General.

We shall have occasion to show that had this movement of General Hull proved successful as it could have been under a brave and efficient officer, the Canadians would have flocked by thousands to the American standard. But when a disinterested and unprejudiced man views in its true light the different attempts made by the American army to invade Upper Canada, and the disastrous calamities which fell to the lot of those unfortunate and too confiding Canadians who had joined the American Eagle at Sandwich, he is not surprised that the Canadians were more on their guard after that time, and that they did not blindly trust the good faith of the invaders, when the remembrance of the shameful abandonment of their countrymen by General Hull was still fresh in their memories.

As our department is exclusively confined to the History of the Province of Lower Canada, we must apologise to our readers if we have drawn their attention to events which belong more particularly to the History of the Upper Province and of the United States. But our intention is to take things at their origin, and to show that the Canadians would have observed quite a different conduct towards the Americans, had the latter used the proper means and acted generously with them. But how could General Hull, in the eyes of the nations of the world, exculpate himself for his shameful and base abandonment of those friendly Canadians who had joined the stars and stripes of the American people? How, after such a flagrant violation of national honour and trust, could the Canadians be induced to believe that they would not be treated in a similar manner a second time? After having issued his proclamation of the 12th of July, inviting the Canadians to abandon their allegiance to the Crown of England and to join the American Union, one month and four days after this solemn invitation and engagement on the part of an American Brigadier General, who, in his military and official capacity was representing the American nation, those honest and faithful Canadians who had embraced the people's cause against the tyranny of monarchical institutions, were handed over to the British officers to be treated as rebels and traitors and thus exposed to an ignominious death!!! Have Americans ever seriously reflected on the awful predicament in which those noble victims of their devotedness to the spirit of republicanism, were placed, and that too, by the cowardly and treacherous abandonment of an American General, who, in the name of his nation, had pledged his word that they would be protected in their lives and property? We repeat the question—Has any American truly and seriously brought his mind to think of this shameful transaction on the part of General Hull, and then been inconsiderate and thoughtless enough